

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

**This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:**

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (currently amended): A process for preparing a serine-rich protein comprising the steps of culturing a bacterium containing a ~~cysteine synthase~~cysK (~~cysK~~) gene and a gene encoding the serine-rich protein in a culture medium thereby producing the serine-rich protein; and harvesting the serine-rich protein, wherein said bacterium is transformed with a vector containing the *cysK* gene and a vector containing the gene encoding the serine-rich protein.

2. (currently amended): A process for preparing a serine-rich protein comprising the steps of culturing a bacterium containing a ~~cysteine synthase~~cysK (~~cysK~~) gene and a gene encoding the serine-rich protein in a culture medium thereby producing the serine-rich protein; and harvesting the serine-rich protein, wherein said bacterium is transformed with a vector containing both the *cysK* gene and the gene encoding the serine-rich protein.

3. (canceled).

4. (original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the *cysK* gene is derived from *E. coli*.

5. (canceled).
6. (previously presented): The process according to claim 1, wherein the serine-rich protein is leptin or IL-12p40(interleukin 12  $\beta$  chain).
7. (previously presented): A recombinant vector comprising both a *cysK* gene and a gene encoding a serine-rich protein.
8. (original): A bacterium transformed with a recombinant vector according to claim 7.
9. (previously presented): A bacterium transformed with a vector containing a *cysK* gene and a vector containing a gene encoding a serine-rich protein.
10. (canceled).
11. (previously presented): The process according to claim 2, wherein the *cysK* gene is derived from *E. coli*.

Claims 12 - 14. (canceled).

15. (previously presented): The process according to claim 2, wherein the serine-rich protein is leptin or IL-12p40 (interleukin 12 $\beta$  chain).

16. (previously presented): The bacterium according to claim 9, wherein the vector containing the *cysK* gene is plasmid pAC104CysK as shown Fig. 2 and the vector containing the gene encoding the serine-rich protein is plasmid pEDIL-12p40 as shown in Fig. 3.